

EDWARDS, NIVIAN

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CONTEMPORARIES

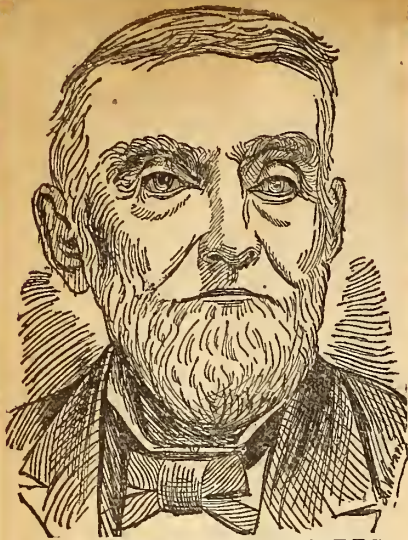
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Abraham Lincoln's Contemporaries

Ninian Edwards

Excerpts from newspapers and other
sources

From the files of the
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection



HON. NINIAN W. EDWARDS.
Monitor Sept. 5-1889
 He Passed Away Quietly and Peace-
 fully Monday at 10:30 a.m.

While the announcement of the death of Hon. Ninian W. Edwards will not be a surprise to our readers, it will carry with it a deep pang of regret to the hearts of the people of the community of which he has been so long an honored and useful member. For some years past Mr. Edwards' health has been failing, and for the last week it has been known by his physician and family that he could not recover. A great part of that time he has been semi-delirious and has required the almost constant attention of his nurses. Several days ago his brother, Gen. Albert G. Edwards, of St. Louis, and his son, Charles Edwards, of Chicago, were telegraphed for and have been in the city ever since. His death occurred at 10:30 o'clock yesterday morning at the residence of his son, A. S. Edwards, on South Fifth street, where he has resided since the death of his wife, about a year and a half ago. At the last he was unconscious and did not recognize the faces of dear ones around him, but seemed to pass away without pain. Dr. Buck, his attending physician, attributes his death to a general wearing out of the system incident to old age, but thinks that over exertion and anxiety about some business affairs that have engaged his attention lately has hastened his end.

Ninian W. Edwards, was born near Frankfort, Ky., April 15, 1809. His father, Ninian Edwards, prominent in history as the first territorial governor of Illinois, was at that time chief justice of the court of appeals of Kentucky, but on receiving his appointment as territorial governor, removed to this state the same year, settling at Kaskaskia, then the state capital. His son, the subject of this sketch, was educated at Transylvania university, at Lexington, Ky., graduating from the law department of that excellent school in 1833. In 1832 previous to his graduation, he married Miss Elizabeth P.

Todd, a daughter of Robert S. Todd, of Lexington, Ky., and a sister of Mrs. Lincoln, Mrs. Dr. Wallace and Mrs. C. M. Smith, of this city. Mrs. Edwards, a lovely, noble and accomplished lady, who was known and beloved throughout this city and state, died suddenly at her home on South Second street, Feb. 22, 1878, and since that time Mr. Edwards' health has rapidly declined. After his graduation he returned to this state and commenced the practice of law. In 1834 he was appointed by Gov. Reynolds attorney general of the state, which office he resigned in 1835, preferring to live in Springfield, rather than Vandalia, then the state capital. From 1836 to 1852 Mr. Edwards served as representative and senator in the general assembly of the state and was prominent as one of the famous "Long nine." So called because of their great stature. The senators were A. G. Herndon and Job Fletcher, and the representatives, Abraham Lincoln, Ninian W. Edwards, John Dawson, Andrew McCormick, Dan Stone, Wm. F. Elkin and Robert L. Wilson. Mr. Edwards was the last survivor of this noted body of men, the rest having long since passed away.

He was also member of the constitutional convention of 1848 and in 1852 was appointed attorney before the board of commissioners to investigate the claims of canal contractors against the state amounting to over \$1,500,000.

In 1854 he was appointed by Gov. Matteson state superintendent of public instruction, and held the office until 1857. During his incumbency he drafted the first free school laws of the state, and was always a devoted champion of free education. In 1862 he was appointed U. S. commissary by President Lincoln. Mr. Edwards, aside from his high ability as a lawyer and public officer, was the author of several valuable books, among them being The History of Illinois, including The Life and Times of Gov. Edwards, written at request of the Illinois Historical Society.

As a lawyer Mr. Edwards' opinions were eagerly sought after by prominent members of the legal fraternity, and even after he had given up active practice he was often consulted on intricate legal questions.

In appearance he was at once striking and peculiar. His great height and somewhat stooping, though dignified, gait attracted attention wherever he went. His countenance was one indicative at once of intelligence and character, and yet there was a peculiar softness and gentleness of manner that bespoke the true nature of the man. In the family circle and among his dearest friends, and especially the young, he was all gentleness and affection, while his demeanor was always marked by that rare courtesy which is commonly alluded to as "old-fashioned" because of its very rarity. For years his figure has been a familiar one on the streets of our city, as in his daily walks he passed in and out among us, and in the places where he has been so long known he will be sadly missed by the people among whom he has lived a life full of honor and good deeds.



Lincoln Lore

September, 1979

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Mary Jane Hubler, Editorial Assistant. Published each month by the
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Number 1699

LINCOLN'S SPRINGFIELD FRIENDS: FRIENDS OF THE NEGRO

On June 24, 1847, Benjamin Bond offered a resolution to the Illinois Constitutional Convention "to report a provision prohibiting free negroes from emigrating into this State, and that no person shall bring slaves into this State from other States and set them free." Bond's motion eventually became Article 14 of the Illinois Constitution. Abraham Lincoln was not a member of the constitutional convention, and, since he assumed his seat in the United States House of Representatives in December, he was not in Springfield on March 6, 1848, to vote on the article. There is nothing on the subject in his surviving correspondence. Some of Lincoln's friends and political associates, however, were members of the convention, and many of his Springfield neighbors did vote on the constitution — and on Article 14, which was submitted separately for a vote — in the spring of 1848. The record of the convention and of the votes of his Springfield friends goes a long way towards dashing any argument that Abraham Lincoln's racial views were deeply rooted in Western negro-phobia.

Benjamin Bond was a Whig, but his resolution stirred plenty of opposition among fellow Whig delegates to the constitutional convention. Stephen Trigg Logan, who had been Lincoln's law partner three years before, was one of the Whig delegates who had doubts about the resolution. "It was a subject of a good deal of delicacy," he suggested, "and one upon which it was difficult at all times clearly to distinguish between judgement and prejudice." John M. Palmer, a Democrat, detested "one idea" reformers, but "Every impulse of his heart and every feeling of his, was in opposition to slavery." Agitation of the subject blocked quiet movements to ameliorate the slaves' condition and "remove the great stain of moral guilt now upon this great republic." The proposition, therefore, should not be in the constitution. Logan, too,

wanted to leave the proposition out, in part because he "respected the abolitionists and believed them to be honest and sincere." Stephen A. Hurlbut, a Whig like Logan, "never would consent to" the proposition.

Lincoln's brother-in-law Ninian Wirt Edwards was also a member of the convention. A month after Bond offered his resolution, Edwards suggested a cleverly thought out amendment to the proposed bill of rights:

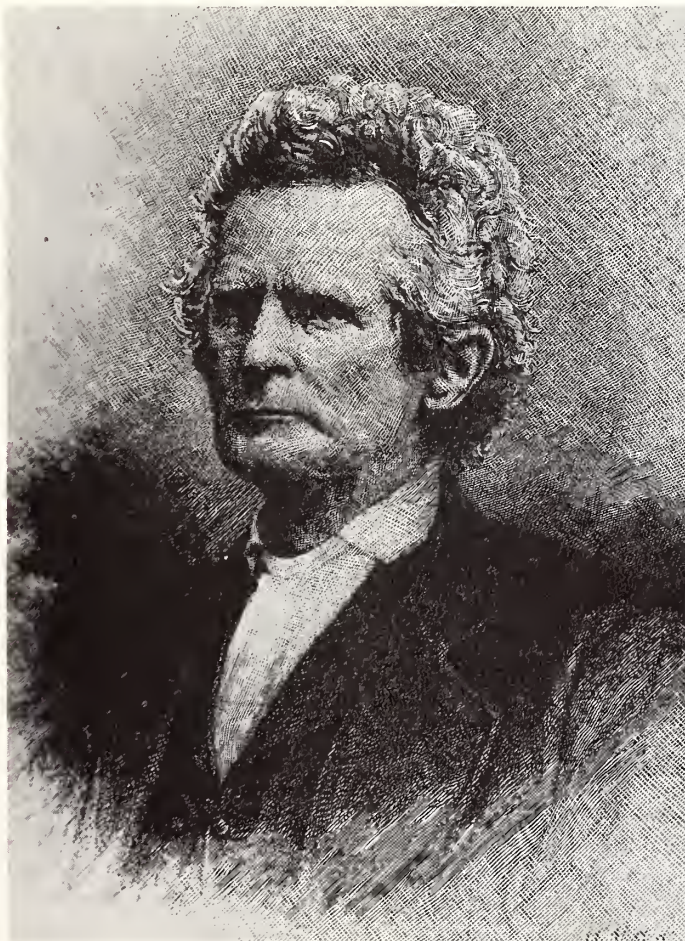
Whereas, so much of section nineteen of the bill of rights as provides for the restriction upon blacks, in connection with certain civil rights, privileges and immunities, is an implied admission of their possession of such rights, as citizens of this state and the United States, in the absence

of such constitutional restrictions; and, *whereas*, the directions therein given to the Legislature presupposes that any portion of the people of this state would be in favor of conferring such rights and privileges (as is therein denied) to colored people; and *whereas*, the Legislature would have no power to allow to persons of color to hold office and without any constitutional prohibition have already passed laws with severe penalties, not only making intermarriage and marriage contracts between them and the whites a criminal offence, but null and void, therefore,

Resolved, That said article be committed to the committee on Revision with instructions to omit so much of said section as refers to persons of color.

Springfield voted overwhelmingly to bar entry of Negroes into Illinois, 774-148. The minuscule 16% minority which defied prejudice, however, contained a number of people whose names are quite familiar to Lincoln students.

STEPHEN TRIGG LOGAN was true to his stand at the convention. On voting day he voted against the exclusion clause. A Kentuckian, like Lincoln, Logan had been Lincoln's law partner from 1841 to 1844, when the partnership was amicably dissolved so that Logan could bring his son David



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FIGURE 1. Stephen Trigg Logan grew timid in old age, but in 1848 he said "no."

into his firm. Lincoln and Logan were close associates in the Whig party in the 1840s, and Logan would be the Whig candidate for Lincoln's Congressional seat the next August.

NINIAN WIRT EDWARDS was also true to his position at the convention and voted against the exclusion clause. Edwards, also a Kentuckian by birth, had married Mary Todd Lincoln's sister Elizabeth in 1832. Edwards was also a Whig, though his political views differed considerably in tone from Lincoln's. Usher F. Linder recalled that the socially prominent Edwards hated "democracy . . . as the devil is said to hate holy water." In August he would run for the Illinois House of Representatives.

ANSON G. HENRY, who was one of Lincoln's closest political associates in the 1840s as well as his doctor, voted against the clause barring Negroes from Illinois. Lincoln and Henry were perhaps the most organization-minded Whigs in the state, and the doctor was a tireless letter-writer and political worker. Henry had been born in Richfield, New York, but had lived in Illinois since the early 1830s. Later in 1848, he and Lincoln would stump the district for Zachary Taylor.

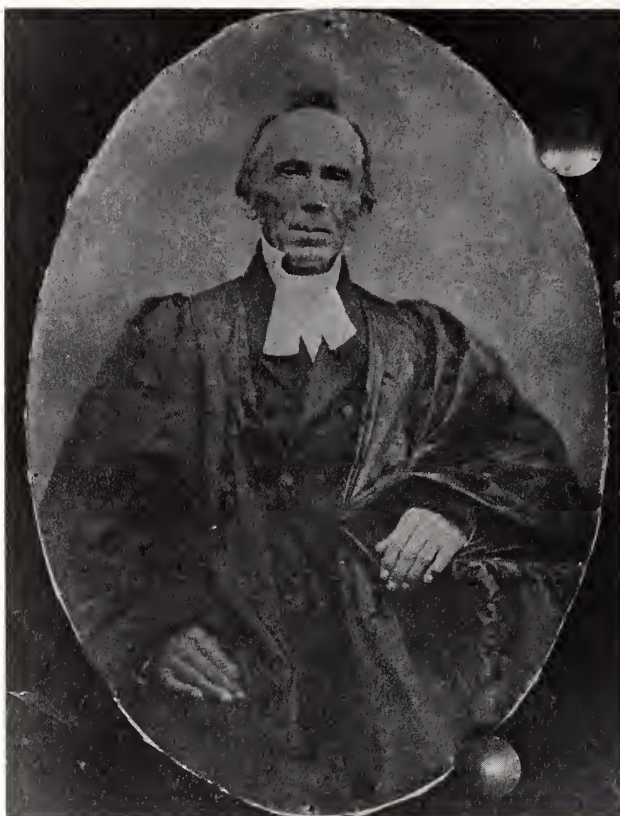
SIMEON FRANCIS, who also voted against the exclusion clause, was the editor of Springfield's Whig newspaper, the *Illinois State Journal*. After what Lincoln referred to as the fatal first of January, 1841, Mrs. Francis had been instrumental in getting Lincoln and Mary Todd back together again. Simeon Francis frequently opened the *Journal's* pages to Lincoln. He had been born in Connecticut, but he moved to Springfield in 1831. By 1848 he was thinking of moving to Oregon, and a year later Lincoln would seek his appointment as Secretary of Oregon Territory from the Taylor administration.

JAMES COOK CONKLING, another opponent of the exclusion clause, was a Princeton graduate, born in New York City. When he moved to Springfield in 1838, he very quickly moved into genteel society. He married Mercy Ann Levering, one of Mary Todd Lincoln's best friends. A Whig in politics, Conkling had been elected mayor of Springfield in 1844.



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FIGURE 2. John Todd Stuart abstained.



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FIGURE 3. The Reverend Charles Dresser abstained.

JAMES HARVEY MATHENY was also a Whig associate of Lincoln's. He was probably the best man at Lincoln's wedding in 1842. In 1858 Stephen A. Douglas would call Matheny, Lincoln's "especial confidential friend for the last twenty years." He was an Illinois native.

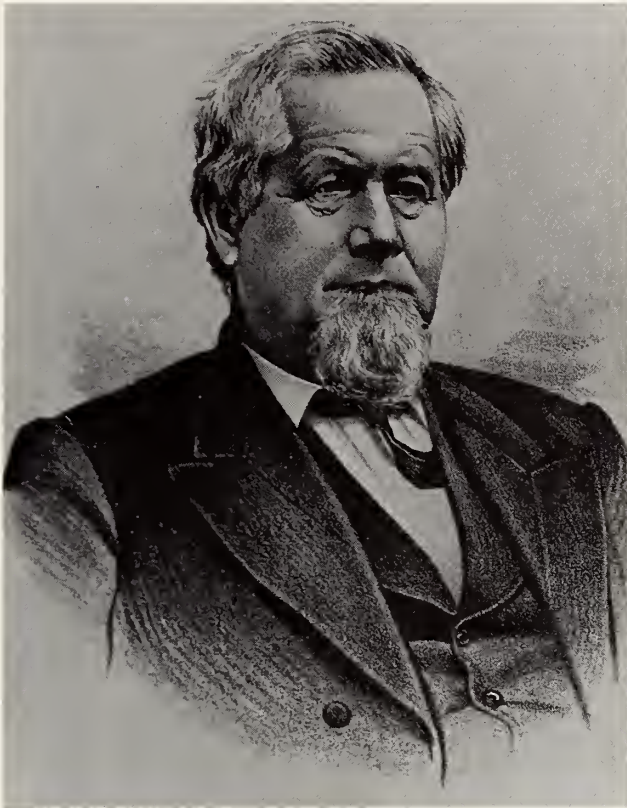
ALBERT TAYLOR BLEDSOE was the chief editorial writer for the *Illinois State Journal* while Lincoln was in Congress. Born in Kentucky, he was a West Point graduate, an Episcopal minister at one time, and, for a time, the law partner of Lincoln's friend Edward D. Baker. A Whig in politics, Bledsoe would move from Springfield later in 1848 to take up residence in Mississippi, where his racial views would change a great deal.

BENJAMIN S. EDWARDS voted, as his brother Ninian Wirt did, against the exclusion article. A Yale graduate, his legal career had brought him many of the same acquaintances Lincoln had. After studying law in New Haven, he read law in Stephen T. Logan's office, was briefly associated with Edward D. Baker, and in 1843 became John Todd Stuart's partner. Stuart had been Lincoln's first law partner. Edwards was a Whig.

Some people who voted for the constitution did not vote on the Negro exclusion clause. The meaning of an abstention on this issue is not altogether clear, but it shows at least a lack of aggressive prejudice, a willingness not to bait the race issue, and a contentment with leaving the free Negro alone.

JOHN TODD STUART abstained on the exclusion article. A Kentuckian who became Lincoln's political mentor in the Illinois Legislature, Stuart was also the man who encouraged Lincoln to study law. Thereafter, he showed his faith in the New Salem railsplitter by taking him as his partner.

CHARLES DRESSER also abstained from voting on the exclusion article. Born in Connecticut, he became Springfield's Episcopal Rector in 1838. On November 4, 1842, he solemnized the marriage vows of Abraham Lincoln and Mary Todd.



From the Louis A. Warren
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FIGURE 4. John M. Palmer.

Not all of the voters against the Negro exclusion clause were Whigs or friends of Abraham Lincoln, of course. Peter Cartwright, an ardent Democrat whom Lincoln had defeated in his race for Congress in 1846, voted against the article. And John Calhoun, another Democrat who had appointed the penniless Lincoln as his deputy surveyor in New Salem, abstained from voting on the article.

Nor were Lincoln's personal and political friends unanimous in their opposition to the exclusion of free Negroes from Illinois.

WILLIAM HENRY HERNDON voted for the exclusion article. At the time of the vote, he was Lincoln's law partner and enthusiastic Whig ally. They were having a dispute, however, over Lincoln's opposition to the Mexican War. Herndon could not understand Lincoln's stand in a constitutional, moral, or political sense, though Lincoln sent him letter after letter explaining his position.

DAVID LOGAN did not vote the way his father Stephen Trigg Logan voted. He supported the exclusion of Negroes from the state.

WILLIAM BUTLER, famed for his ability to predict the outcome of elections, was born in Kentucky. A friend of Stephen T. Logan's, he was an active Whig and a political associate of Lincoln's. He supported the exclusion article.

The preponderance in number as well as in importance in Lincoln's life lay with those who opposed the exclusion article. Lincoln's friends opposed it, though there were significant exceptions — most notably, William Herndon.

The vote on this constitutional article is not a reliable predictor of later political behavior. Hurlbut became a Republican and was entrusted by Lincoln in 1861 with a delicate information-gathering mission to South Carolina. Palmer also became a Republican and a sturdy supporter of Lincoln's political career. Lincoln in turn made him a brigadier general. Other members of the constitutional convention who protested anti-black legislation had very different political careers. Edwards became a Democrat — a move that shocked Lincoln — and he opposed Lincoln's

election in 1860. Logan's politics during the Lincoln administration were murky. Herndon said that he was like other "monied men": "old & timid — disturbed and terrified." During Reconstruction he became a Democrat, though he later returned to the Republican fold.

Simeon Francis, Anson Henry, and James Cook Conkling became Republicans. Conkling was staunchly antislavery and told President Lincoln of his hope that Union military victories would leave "no question as to the condition and rights of 'American citizens of African descent.'"

Matheny, on the other hand, dragged his feet in becoming a Republican, entering the party much later than Lincoln. Edwards became a Republican in 1856, but he switched to the Democratic party a year later. Albert Taylor Bledsoe, far from becoming a Republican, grew gradually to advocate slavery as biblically justified. He was the Assistant Secretary of War of the Confederate States of America!

The complexities of American politics in the middle of the nineteenth century prevent attaching any clear racial views to those of Lincoln's friends who opposed the exclusion article. Their later political views were not necessarily consistent with a friendly stance towards the Negro. Moreover, the extremism of the article probably caused some to doubt its constitutionality, no matter what their sentiments on racial questions. Still, the mass of voters certainly did not think it extreme, and over 80% of Springfield's citizens supported it. To be a part of so small a minority in opposition was a significant, even heroic, act.

Editor's Note: Archivist Dean DeBolt of the Sangamon State University Library generously sent microfilmed copies of the poll books on which this article is based.

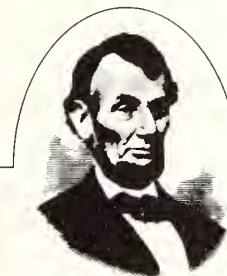
R. GERALD McMURTRY LECTURES PUBLICATIONS AVAILABLE

Printed copies of the 1979 R. Gerald McMurtry Lecture, Don E. Fehrenbacher's *The Minor Affair: An Adventure in Forgery and Detection*, are available on request. A few copies of the 1978 lecture, Richard N. Current's *Unity, Ethnicity, & Abraham Lincoln*, are still available as well. Requests will be filled as long as supplies last.

THE MINOR AFFAIR An Adventure in Forgery and Detection

DON E.
FEHRENBACHER

THE SECOND ANNUAL
R. GERALD McMURTRY LECTURE
DELIVERED AT
FORT WAYNE, INDIANA
1979



A.G. Edwards: A 107-Year-Old Legacy

It has often been noted that the apple never falls far from the tree. To illustrate this observation, one need look no further than the family tree of A.G. Edwards & Sons Inc., the prestigious brokerage firm headquartered in St. Louis, and continuously managed by family members since its inception in 1887.

Founder Albert Gallatin Edwards was born Oct. 15, 1812, in Lexington, Ky. The second son of Illinois Governor Ninian W. Edwards, Albert graduated from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point at 20 years of age.

Assigned to the Mounted Rangers—the U.S. Army's first permanent cavalry regiment at Jefferson Barracks, south of St. Louis—Albert served for three years, before resigning from the service four days after his wedding in 1835. He immediately joined William L. Ewing, a St. Louis company specializing in providing goods to stores throughout the Southwest.

Albert stayed with William L. Ewing until the early 1860s, during which time he developed a political alliance with Abraham Lincoln. At the outbreak of the Civil War, Albert and the other pro-Union supporters battled against Governor Claiborne Fox Jackson, a Confederate sympathizer. The pro-secession troops were defeated and Missouri did not secede from the Union. Albert was then commissioned a brigadier general in the Missouri State Militia.

Six days before he was assassinated, Lincoln appointed Albert assistant secretary of the Treasury for the Sub-Treasury Bank in St. Louis. General Edwards held this post until his resignation in 1887, when he and his eldest son, Benjamin Franklin Edwards, formed a partnership to open A.G. Edwards & Son, a brokerage company located in the heart of St. Louis' financial district. Within months, the firm became the only St. Louis brokerage handling trades for local banks on the NYSE. Three years later, Benjamin's younger brother, George Lane, joined the firm. An "s" was added to the company's name, and A.G. Edwards & Sons was well on its way to establishing itself as the nation's largest brokerage firm head-



Albert Gallatin Edwards

quartered outside of New York City.

"The firm was headquartered in St. Louis to maintain an economic perspective without succumbing to the herd mentality of Wall Street," said Jan Broderick, A.G. Edwards curator of collections and company historian. "It allowed Edwards to develop its own philosophy and focus on its strategy of serving smaller communities throughout the Midwest."

In 1898, Edwards purchased a seat on the NYSE, and in 1900

opened its first New York office.

In 1891, George Lane Edwards became managing partner. He ran the company until 1919, after which another brother, Albert Ninian Edwards, took command. The sale of Liberty Bonds during World War I had uncovered an investor base largely ignored until then, and Edwards aggressively pursued these new investors with much success.

Presley W. Edwards, Benjamin Edwards' son, joined the firm in 1925 and became managing partner four years later, a post he held until 1965. Presley's tenure saw Edwards weather the storm of Black Thursday where the largest single client loss was only \$5,000 in an account of more than \$1 million. Losses were kept at a minimum because Edwards followed a policy of not allowing stocks to be purchased on the low margins typically available in other parts of the country. Also at the time of the Crash, Edwards' employees worked 'round the clock for two days and nights contacting customers.

Economic hardships of the Great Depression gave way to the equally harsh reality of World War II. Although Presley envisioned opening branch offices in other states, it didn't happen until after the end of the war.

In 1949 under Presley's guidance, Edwards became the first brokerage firm outside of New York to install an IBM computer system. They issued their first computerized customer statement in 1952.

Benjamin F. Edwards III, Presley's son, joined the firm in 1956, and in 1966 became the company's newest managing partner. In the intervening years, Ben Edwards has continued to enrich the legacy of A.G. Edwards' proud heritage. —Jonas Flagg



Benjamin Franklin Edwards



George Lane Edwards



Albert Ninian Edwards



Presley W. Edwards

PHOTOGRAPHS: MISSOURI HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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